

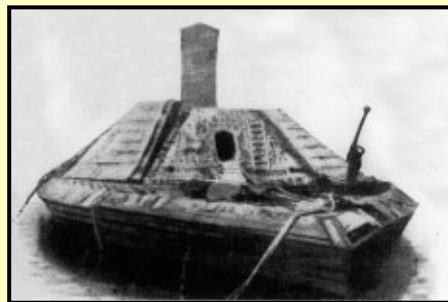
# OUTFITTING CSS ALBEMARLE



*Ready for Action*



Here, on the Roanoke River, is where the ironclad gunboat CSS *Albemarle* was outfitted and readied for service in 1863–1864. One of the most successful Confederate ironclads, the 376-ton *Albemarle* sank 29 Federal vessels before its own demise. Construction began in the spring of 1863 in a cornfield about 20 miles downstream at Edwards Ferry, near Scotland Neck. *Albemarle*'s designer, a 19-year-old inventor named Charles Gilbert Elliott, later wrote, "No vessel was ever constructed under more ad-



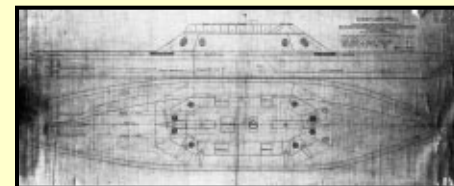
*CSS Albemarle was raised and towed to the Norfolk Navy Yard in 1865 – Courtesy Naval Historical Foundation*

verse circumstances," including frequent shortages of labor and materials. Like other ironclads, *Albemarle* was solidly built with pointed ends for ramming enemy vessels and a flat bottom for shallow-water operations. It measured 158 feet long and 35 feet 3 inches across the beam.

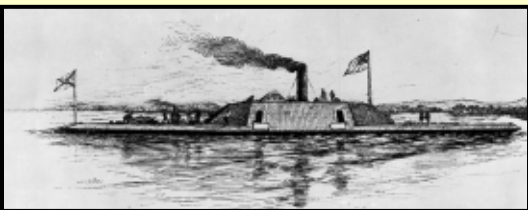
In October 1863, *Albemarle* was towed to Halifax to be covered with iron plating. In addition, here the interior woodwork was completed, final adjustments were made to the

*"Went to see the...Gunboat 'Albemarle.'...She is now nearly completed, Engines & Propeller in & will, if the Department at Richmond send on the iron to complete her armour, steam down the river next month.... We saw some of the famous Brooke Guns, much smaller in the bore than I had supposed." – Catherine Devereux Edmondston, journal, Feb. 16, 1864.*

vessel's machinery, and the ship's stores were gathered. With a navy yard located on a rail line, Halifax was ideally situated for these final tasks. Commissioned on April 17, 1864, *Albemarle* engaged a Federal fleet two days later at the Battle of Plymouth but was damaged during a second battle on May 5. *Albemarle* limped into Plymouth for repairs to its steering mechanism and smokestack, but, before they were completed, U.S. Navy Lt. William B. Cushing sank it using a "torpedo" (a tin powder keg with an internal percussion cap) on October 27.



*Plan of CSS Albemarle  
– Courtesy Naval Historical Foundation*



*Ready for action. CSS Albemarle was equipped with two Brooke rifled cannons – Courtesy Naval Historical Foundation*

Catherine Devereux Edmondston (1823–1875), a plantation mistress at Looking Glass, near Enfield, was an ardent secessionist. Her diary, kept between the years 1860–1866, was published in 1979 as the *Journal of a Secesh Lady*.  
– Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives

